

States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

LISTED ON:
VLR
06/19/2013
NRHP
09/09/2013

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Mount Sharon

Other names/site number: DHR File No. 068-0104

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 19184 Mount Sharon Lane

City or town: Orange State: VA County: Orange

Not For Publication: n/a Vicinity: x

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this x nomination request for determination of eligibility meets
the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic
Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property x meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I
recommend that this property be considered significant at the following
level(s) of significance:

 national statewide x local

Applicable National Register Criteria:
 A B x C D

[Signature] 7/23/15
Signature of certifying official/Title: Date
Virginia Department of Historic Resources
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: Date

Title : State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>4</u>	<u>6</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	sites
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>5</u>	<u>7</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: Single dwelling

DOMESTIC: Secondary dwelling

DOMESTIC: Secondary structure

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: Single dwelling

DOMESTIC: Secondary dwelling

DOMESTIC: Secondary structure

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Georgian Revival

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

Foundation: CONCRETE; BRICK

Walls: CONCRETE; BRICK

Roof: STONE: Slate

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Mount Sharon house is located on the north side of Route 600 (Mount Sharon Road) in north central Orange County approximately four miles northeast of the town of Orange, Virginia. The entrance road to the property is marked by a pair of circular brick gateposts; these are contributing structures and survive from the previous (begun 1888) Mount Sharon dwelling which was replaced by the present house in 1937. The main house is a five-part restrained Georgian Revival dwelling. The walls and foundation of the house are constructed of reinforced concrete with Flemish-bond brick veneer. The gable roofs of the center block and wings, and the gambrel roofs of the hyphens are covered with slate. The house features an intriguing combination of traditional design and the modern building technology of the 1930s. The only complete Virginia commission of noted New York architect Louis Bancel LaFarge, the Mount Sharon house has undergone few changes and retains excellent historic integrity. The house is surrounded by mature trees, some apparently dating back to the late 18th century, as well as

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mature boxwoods, and has one of the most extensive vistas of the Blue Ridge Mountains in the region. The large boxwoods to the rear of the house date from the early 20th century and form a connection to the current, later garden. In addition to the main house, there are three contributing buildings on the Mount Sharon property. Two of these are contemporary with the current 1937 house: these are a frame chauffeur's quarters and garage (now converted into an office and guest quarters), and a second, more modest frame garage; both retain much of their original appearance. The third contributing building is the farm manager's house, a two-story frame dwelling, probably of late 19th century vintage, which has had a number of additions and several remodelings. Seven additional resources: two simple pole barns, a run-in shed, two storage sheds, a small stable, and a landscaped garden (site) date from the 1980s and 1990s and are non-contributing resources. The period of significance is 1888-1937, which encompasses the period from the construction of the gateposts to the date of construction of the present house and associated outbuildings.

Narrative Description

Site Description

The Mount Sharon house is located on the north side of Route 600 (Mount Sharon Road), some four miles northeast of the town of Orange, Virginia. The gravel entrance drive to the property is marked by a pair of circular brick gateposts (built for the previous Mount Sharon dwelling which was begun in 1888 and was replaced by the present house in 1937). From the entrance, the main portion of the drive winds northeast, rising gently uphill through park-like grounds to form a loop drive in front of the main house. Before the drive enters the immediate vicinity of the house, service roads branch off the main driveway to provide access to the outbuildings and service areas of the property located south and north of the main house.

The main house is surrounded by mature trees and is sited to take full advantage of one of the most extensive vistas of the Blue Ridge Mountains in the region. A number of the current trees date to the early 20th century, and many appear to date to the late 18th century or early 19th century. Mature boxwoods, added ca. 1900-1905, are the remnants of plantings around the previous dwelling. The boxwoods which remain at the rear (northeast) of the house form a connection with the current Mount Sharon gardens. The property contains a number of secondary buildings, all located at some distance from the house and at lower elevations, and shielded from direct view by topography and landscape plantings. South of the house is a frame garage and chauffeur's quarters (now converted into an office and guest house), built ca. 1937; north of the house are a small frame garage, also built ca. 1937, and a late 19th century frame manager's house. At greater distances to the south, east, and north of the main house are some late 20th agricultural structures: barns, sheds, and a new horse stable. The present Mount Sharon property, approximately 77.5 acres, is the residue of a plantation that formerly contained nearly 1,000 acres.

Dwelling (1937, contributing building)

The Mount Sharon house, completed in 1937, is a five-part restrained Georgian Revival dwelling which melds traditional design elements with superb craftsmanship and the modern building

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technology of its construction era. The main (center) block of the house consists of a two-story, gable-front wing. The story-and-a-half, gambrel-roofed hyphens connect the main block to flanking two-story, gable-front wings, which are slightly lower and of slightly smaller scale than the center block. The foundation and walls of the house are constructed of reinforced concrete and steel with Flemish-bond brick veneer. The house has five interior brick chimneys. All roofs are covered with Buckingham slate.

For additional strength and fireproofing, there are 8 inches of concrete and 8 inches of steel between each floor, and every third stud is steel in the interior walls. The walls separating the sections of the house are 2 feet thick. The interior walls are plastered, and some walls are embellished with paneling.

On the front (southwest) elevation of the house, the flanking wings extend slightly in advance of the center block, while at the rear (northeast), the center block extends beyond the line of the wings. On the front, the center block has three bays (windows flanking a central door on the first story; three windows on the second); each hyphen and wing has two bays (two windows on the first and the second story). All of the doors and windows are of wood and are original. Most of the first-story and second-story windows in the center block, the first-story windows in the hyphens, and most of the first-story windows in the end wings have 6-over-9, double-hung sash. The dormer windows in the hyphens have hinged 6-light casement sash. The second-story windows on the wings are 6-over-6, double-hung sash. There are several windows with 9-over-9 lights, and a number of French doors on the first-story rear elevation. With the exception of the dormer windows in the hyphens, the windows have simple entablature surrounds, as do the rear French doors and other secondary doors. There are gauged-brick jack arches over all windows except the dormer windows in the hyphens and the second-story windows in the wings (the tops of the latter touch the cornice moldings). The robust pedimented gable and cornice moldings of the center block, both front and rear, are embellished with modillions and lunette windows, while modillions and lunettes are absent from the pedimented gables and cornices of the wings.

As noted above, on the rear elevation of the house the center block extends beyond the line of the wings. This design element allows a close visual connection with the rear gardens and permits the extensive use of first-story French doors. The rear of the center block has three bays: on the first story is a central double-leaf French door flanked by double-hung windows with 9-over-9 sash; on the second story, above the French doors and each window, are three identical windows with 6-over-9 double-hung sash. The gable and cornice moldings, embellished with modillions, and the lunette window in the pediment, mirror those on the front elevation. The extension of the center block beyond the line of the hyphens and wings also allows for a double-leaf French door on each of the side elevations of the center block's first story. On the second story, above each of the side doors is a window with 6-over-9 double-hung sash. Echoing the fenestration of the front elevation, each hyphen has two bays on the rear elevation. French doors are used in lieu of windows on the first story of the rear elevations of the hyphens; the second stories have the same casement sashes as the front elevation. All of the rear French doors open onto a level, grass- and brick-surfaced terrace area which provides a connection to the gardens. The rear elevations of the end wings both have two bays on the first story; however, the fenestration of the second stories is slightly different. There is a single window on the second-story rear elevation of the northern

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wing (to accommodate interior storage area), while the southern wing has two windows, positioned over those on the first story.

The side elevations of each of the end wings reflect some of their interior functions. The side (northwest) elevation of the northern wing has four windows on the first story (a full-sized window at either end, and two shorter and narrower windows in the center to serve bathrooms). The second story has three evenly spaced windows: the end windows are located above the corresponding first-story windows; the center window is located above the smaller first-story windows. On the side (southeast) elevation of the southern wing, the first-story fenestration has only two bays: a window with 6-over-9 sash and a doorway sheltered by a gable-roofed porch. A central blank wall between these features indicates the presence of a service stair. The second story has four bays, all windows with 6-over-6 sash, evenly spaced along this elevation.

On the front entry, there is no front porch or portico; brick steps lead to the double-leaf, raised-panel front doors, located in the middle bay of the center block. The doorway is embellished with a pedimented Doric surround with pilasters and triglyphs, a rectangular transom, and paneled jambs. The front doors lead into a vestibule and from there into a T-shaped entry hall. This entry hall contains, at the northern end, a winding stair and what was originally the telephone room. Closets and a powder room occupy the corresponding space on the southern end. (An unobtrusive secondary, single-leaf exterior door, entered from a set of curved brick steps at the northwest corner of the center block next to the hyphen, opens into the stair area, providing direct access to the basement stair leading to what was originally the gun room. Like the main doorway, this secondary door has no porch. It has no decorative surround, but rather has the same simple entablature surround used on the windows and other secondary doors.) The doorways leading from the hall to the living room, to the powder room and closet area, and into the hyphens are embellished with pulvinated friezes and broken pediments. The entire rear (northeast) half of the center block is occupied by the formal living room. The living room retains its original mantel and chair rail. The current owners have made a few additions to the woodwork in this room. In addition to an overmantel, they have added friezes and broken pediments over the entry doors to echo those in the hall. New built-in corner cabinets (modeled on the earlier free-standing cabinets) hide a modern split-system air conditioning system. The original heavy modillion cornice, once paired with boldly-patterned wallpaper, has been replaced by a new egg-and-dart cornice and frieze. All new work follows the style of the original woodwork in the house.

Most other portions of the first and second floors of the house retain their original features, with the exception of wallpaper and fabric. From the northern end of the hall, two steps lead down to the fully-paneled library which occupies the northern hyphen. Here, hinged sections of paneling open to reveal hidden bookcases, as well as a hidden bar. Beyond the library, in the northwest wing, are two guest rooms with private baths. From the southern end of the hall, corresponding steps lead down to the dining room in the southern hyphen. This room has wainscoted walls below a chair rail, a dentil cornice, and a full-height chimney piece. Beyond the dining room, in the southeast wing, are the butler's pantry and food pantry, which retain most of their original fittings (including the original sink and a wooden counter to minimize glass and china damage), and the kitchen. The kitchen has been renovated within the original space; the original

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dumbwaiter remains in place. A simple service stairway against the southeast interior wall of the kitchen provides access to what were once servants' quarters on the second floor and to the laundry and additional service rooms in the basement. Next to this stairway is the kitchen door, which is sheltered by the one-story, gable-roofed kitchen porch, the only porch on the house.

In addition to the servants' quarters noted above, the second floor contains family bedrooms, baths, private office space, and storage areas. The features on this floor, which include some paneled walls, as well as some paneled fireplace surrounds in lieu of mantels, remain virtually unchanged.

The basement originally housed various service and storage areas, including the gun room, laundry, and furnace and coal room. Portions of this space continue to serve their original functions; other rooms have been adapted to serve as an exercise room, additional library space, workshop (formerly the coal room for the original heating boiler), and flower-arranging room (formerly the meat locker).

Careful craftsmanship is evident in the interior finish of the house. In his projects, architect Louis Bancel LaFarge designed his own mantels and woodwork rather than robbing elements from older buildings, and each of the nine fireplaces in the house has a distinctive mantel. On the first floor, quarter-sawn oak floors are screwed and pegged down to heavy pine sleepers to avoid movement of the floor boards. The hidden doors leading to the closets and to the stairs leading to the attic storage area are nearly undetectable when closed. Another of LaFarge's design hallmarks, precision brass hardware, is also much in evidence; examples include the knobs and ball-bearing hinges on the doors, and recessed brass-lined sockets to admit the doorknobs of adjacent doors and permit the doors to lie flat against the woodwork when opened. The original recessed, counterweighted built-in fire screens remain in place in the fireplaces; the counterbalances for these features are ¼-inch-to-½-inch lead weights.

In addition to its reinforced concrete and steel construction, for strength and fireproofing, and its precision hardware and woodwork, the house boasted central low-pressure steam heating, and a humidification system. The humidification system, more common in textile factories of the era than in private residences, was not a modern air-conditioning system, but rather was an environmental control system intended to provide optimum conditions for fabrics and other materials used in the furnishings and interior decoration of the house, including decorative elements such as paintings. The original humidification mechanism for the Mount Sharon house, although no longer in operation, remains in place. A label surviving on the system identifies its components as being supplied by the "Independent Air Filter Co." of Chicago, Illinois.¹

Secondary Resources

Also on the property, and contemporary with the present house, are a frame garage and chauffeur's quarters (now converted into an office and guest quarters), and a smaller frame garage. Both of these are contemporary with the main house and are contributing buildings. A third contributing building is the late 19th century frame farm manager's house. The 1888 brick gateposts, which mark the entrance to the property, are a contributing structure. The property

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also contains six late-20th-century frame agricultural buildings: a small horse stable, a run-in shed, two simple pole barns, and two storage sheds. All built from the late 1980s to the early 1990s, these are considered non-contributing resources due to their recent dates and modest construction.

Gateposts, 1888, Contributing Structure

At the main road, near the southwest corner of the property, the Mount Sharon entrance road is marked by a pair of circular brick gateposts. Standing well over six feet high, these are constructed of brick laid in header bond, and were built at the same time as the previous Mount Sharon house (begun 1888). Due to their age and excellent historic integrity, these gateposts are considered a contributing structure.

Chauffeur's Quarters and Garage, 1937, Contributing Building

Built at the same time as the main house, the chauffeur's quarters and garage is a two-level frame structure that faces north and is built partly into the slope south of the main house, so that it appears one story in height when approached from the main residence. The upper level was the chauffeur's quarters, the lower level served as the garage. Built of frame on a brick foundation, its walls are covered with weatherboards and its gable roof is covered with standing-seam metal. The chauffeur's quarters now serve as a guest house; the garage section has been converted to an office. The exterior of the building still retains excellent historic integrity, and for this reason, and its age, it is considered a contributing building.

Small Garage, 1937, Contributing Building

The small, one-story garage is a modest frame structure which, like the larger building that housed the chauffeur's quarters, is constructed of frame on a low brick foundation, with weather boarded walls and a gable roof covered with standing-seam metal. It is located just northeast of the main house. It faces west; the original fixed-sash 6-light and 9-light windows (including those on the sliding doors), give this little building a cottage-like appearance. The building retains excellent historic integrity, and for this reason, and its age, is considered a contributing building.

Farm Manager's House, late 19th century, Contributing Building

The original portion of the farm manager's house is a two-story frame I-house built on a low stone masonry foundation and with brick end chimneys. Probably of late 19th century vintage, it has had a number of additions and several remodeling, but the exterior still retains sufficient integrity to convey its early appearance. A two-story frame rear ell, built on a concrete foundation, was added in the 20th century, and is similar to the original section in style, materials, and proportions. The walls of all portions of this building are covered with weatherboards, and the gable roofs of the front portion and rear ell are covered with standing-seam metal. It is located just north of the main house, and faces southwest. Due to its age and integrity, it is considered a contributing building.

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Horse Stable, late 1980s to early 1990s, Non-Contributing Building

Located east of the small garage, the horse stable is a one-story, frame structure with a gable roof. The walls of this building are covered with T-1-11 siding and the roof is covered with asphalt shingles. Due to its recent date this building is considered a non-contributing resource.

Run-in Shed, late 1980s to early 1990s, Non-Contributing Building

Located south of the main house, this one-story frame building, used to provide shelter to horses in pasture, is of pole construction (i.e., built on posts set in the ground) and has a shed roof. The walls of this building are covered with T-1-11 siding and the roof is covered with asphalt shingles. Due to its recent date and modest construction this building is considered a non-contributing resource.

Pole Barn 1, late 1980s to early 1990s, Non-Contributing Building

Located in the fields some distance north of the main house, this one-story frame building, used for storage and to provide shelter for animals in pasture, is of pole construction (i.e., of posts set in the ground) and has a low gable roof. The walls of this building are covered with T-1-11 siding and the roof is covered with asphalt shingles. Due to its recent date and modest construction this building is considered a non-contributing resource.

Pole Barn 2, late 1980s to early 1990s, Non-Contributing Building

Located northwest of the above-mentioned pole barn, and virtually identical to it, this one-story frame building, like the first pole barn, is used for storage and to provide shelter for animals in pasture. The walls of this building are covered with T-1-11 siding and the low gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles. Due to its recent date and modest construction this building is considered a non-contributing resource.

Storage Shed 1 (Storage Shed and Dog Run), late 1980s to early 1990s, Non-Contributing Building

This low frame building, located slightly south of the main house, contains a dog kennel, dog run, and a storage area. The walls of this building are covered with T-1-11 siding and the low shed roof is covered with asphalt shingles. Due to its recent date and modest construction this building is considered a non-contributing resource.

Storage Shed 2 (Storage and Garden Shed), late 1980s to early 1990s, Non-Contributing Building

Located east of the horse stable, this building serves as storage for garden supplies. Its walls are covered with T-1-11 siding and its shed roof is covered with asphalt shingles. Due to its recent date and modest construction this building is considered a non-contributing resource.

Landscaped Garden, 1995, Non-Contributing Site

The present extensive gardens, which are located along a number of terraces extending up the slope to the rear (northeast) of the present Mount Sharon house, are partly on the site of the now-vanished earlier Mount Sharon garden, a feature which family traditions of the Taliaferro family, original owners of Mount Sharon, dated back to the late 18th and 19th centuries. Remnants of this

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early garden survived into the mid-20th century, but subsequently disappeared after several decades of neglect. After they purchased the property in 1995, the present owners engaged then-Garden Club of Virginia landscape architect Rudy J. Cavetti to evaluate the site to determine if there was sufficient physical evidence to restore the garden; sadly, he determined that there was not enough evidence for an accurate restoration. A series of new garden rooms, designed by landscape architect Charles J. Stick of Charlottesville, were commissioned for the site, and these have won both statewide and national renown.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register Listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1888-1937

Significant Dates

1888

1937

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

LaFarge, Louis Bancel (architect)

Dunn, Reid A. (contractor)

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Mount Sharon house, located on approximately 77.5 acres near Orange, Virginia, has local architectural significance under Criterion C for the National Register as both an excellent example of a restrained Georgian Revival-style country house, and as the only complete Virginia commission by noted New York architect Louis Bancel LaFarge. (LaFarge's only other known Virginia commission was a portico for the main house at Retreat, a late 18th century frame Federal plantation house with later additions, some two miles north of Mount Sharon near Rapidan in northern Orange County.) Built by general contractor Reid A. Dunn, the Mount Sharon residence exhibits LaFarge's mastery of Georgian Revival design and proportion, as well as his attention to fine craftsmanship and his familiarity with the modern building technology and systems of the late 1930s, including such features as reinforced concrete and steel construction for strength and fireproofing, a humidification system, and central low-pressure steam heating.

In addition to the main house, the property contains brick gateposts from the previous (begun 1888) Mount Sharon house, and three contributing buildings: a late 19th century manager's house and (both built ca. 1937 and contemporary with the current main house) a small garage and a larger frame chauffeur's quarters and garage. Six additional resources: two simple pole barns, a run-in shed, two storage sheds, a small stable, and a landscaped garden (site), date from the late 1980s to early 1990s and are non-contributing resources.

The period of significance for the property is 1888-1937, beginning with the construction of the early gateposts still present from the 19th century and ending with the date of the construction of the present house.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Developmental History

The land surrounding the present Mount Sharon property traces back to two land patents issued to brothers John Taliaferro and Francis Taliaferro in the early 18th century. The first patent, for 935 acres, was issued on June 30, 1726, and an adjoining patent for 1,000 acres was issued on October 13, 1727. Upon John Taliaferro's death in 1757, Francis Taliaferro inherited his brother's share of the lands, and the property remained in his family for over two centuries. At least one earlier Mount Sharon residence, possibly of 18th century vintage, had been destroyed prior to 1876, when Charles Champe Taliaferro, then living in Georgia, inherited the property, which then contained 711 acres. C. C. Taliaferro returned to Virginia in the mid-1880s, and between 1888 and 1890 he constructed a large, elaborate Second Empire residence on the property. He also further embellished the existing gardens and grounds, including the addition of statuary and the circular brick gateposts which still mark the entrance to the property.²

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Financial problems forced the sale of Mount Sharon out of the Taliaferro family in 1935. The property, at approximately 776 acres, was purchased in 1936 by Elizabeth G. Augustus, wife of Ellsworth H. Augustus of Cleveland, Ohio. Mr. Augustus, a banker, industrialist, and philanthropist, was a highly-ranked amateur athlete who was also active in the Boy Scouts of America. Mrs. Augustus's sisters lived in Virginia, which may have been a factor in their acquisition of the Mount Sharon property as a country estate. Mr. and Mrs. Augustus commissioned Louis Bancel LaFarge to design a new country house for the site and demolished C. C. Taliaferro's deteriorating and unfashionable Victorian-era mansion. The present Georgian Revival residence was completed in 1937. As built, the cost of the new house was approximately \$152,000, a then-impressive amount reflecting its expansive plan, extensive use of steel and concrete, up-to-date systems, and top-grade materials and craftsmanship.³

Architect and Builder

Louis Bancel LaFarge (1900-1989), a native of Boston, Massachusetts, was the grandson of painter John LaFarge. He graduated from Harvard in 1922, and subsequently studied architecture at Yale, graduating with a Master's of Fine Arts degree in 1925. He served apprenticeships at the offices of Delano & Aldrich, and then at Peabody, Wilson & Brown, in New York City in 1925-1932, before opening his own practice in New York City in 1932. He specialized in designing substantial homes, and his commissions included residences in The Hamptons on Long Island; the Hudson Valley in New York; Charleston, South Carolina; New Haven, Connecticut; and the Caneel Bay resort in the Virgin Islands. During World War II, he served on General Dwight D. Eisenhower's general staff and was one of the first "Monuments officers" who worked to rescue damaged, threatened, and looted works of art. For his wartime actions, he was decorated by the United States, France, the Netherlands, Belgium and Czechoslovakia. LaFarge also served on numerous arts and architectural commissions, including the New York City Landmarks Commission and the Historic Districts Commission for Nantucket, Massachusetts.⁴

The Mount Sharon house was substantially completed by mid-summer 1937: the new aerial photograph system used to document land parcels in the county shows the house standing but still surrounded by some raw grounds and excavated soil when the Mount Sharon area was photographed on August 17, 1937. Construction of the Mount Sharon house was undertaken by general contractor Reid A. Dunn; Mr. Dunn was conversant with large scale projects involving reinforced concrete: his firm had previously (1930-1931) completed Scott Stadium at the University of Virginia. Mr. Dunn subsequently joined the Richmond office of general contractors Edwin P. Conquest and James A. Moncure, Jr., to form the present firm of Conquest, Moncure and Dunn.⁵ Some of the garden-themed interior decoration elements (particularly wallpaper, fabrics, and rugs), as well as the "rooms" in the rear garden at Mount Sharon, were designed by pioneering female landscape architect Ellen Biddle Shipman, a friend of the Augustus family; however, nothing of Shipman's landscape design survives today.⁶

Mid-20th Century

Mr. and Mrs. Augustus increased the acreage of the Mount Sharon property, and constructed the various subsidiary buildings necessary to a country estate. Like many others in their economic and social class, the family's athletic interests included horsemanship; in addition to the

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buildings surviving on the present house tract, they constructed a large and interesting Sears horse barn, now standing on an adjoining tract.

In 1951, Mr. and Mrs. Augustus sold the Mount Sharon property, then nearly 1,162 acres, to syndicated columnist Nancy Sasser Eldridge, who operated a cattle breeding operation on the farm. A 77.5-acre house tract later was separated from the rest of the farmland, and this constitutes the present Mount Sharon house property. An extensive luxury condominium and vacation home development was proposed for the farmland, but this was defeated in the early 1970s. The former Mount Sharon farmland, which remains in agricultural use, surrounds much of the present Mount Sharon house tract.⁷

The house tract remained in the Eldridge family until 1980; after passing through a number of owners between 1980 and the mid-1990s, the property was acquired by the present owners, Mr. and Mrs. Charles H. Seilheimer, Jr., in 1995.⁸ Active in historic preservation and land conservation organizations, the Seilheimers have sensitively repaired and upgraded the house and grounds. The present 77.5-acre Mount Sharon tract preserves the pastoral setting of the house and surrounding grounds.

Architectural and Regional Context

Fertile soils, a beautiful landscape, and an attractive climate have made the region around Orange County a highly desirable area from the threshold of settlement in the early 18th century onwards. However, large and impressive Georgian houses were relatively rare in the Orange County region (and indeed, in much of the central Virginia Piedmont), during the 18th century. Only a few large brick houses in a recognizable Georgian style were constructed, usually as the centerpieces of large plantations whose owners wished to make a particular statement of their wealth and influence. Lt. Governor Alexander Spotswood's Germanna in northeast Orange County (ca. 1720, burned ca. 1750); Salubria in southeast Culpeper County (built for Spotswood's widow and her second husband in the late 1750s); and the original portion of the Madison family's Montpelier in western Orange County (ca. 1763), were the only brick Georgian prodigy houses of the region. The great majority of the rural dwellings, even those of wealthy individuals, were much more modest, essentially vernacular structures that were usually built of frame and frequently were only one story or a story-and-a-half in height. In the early 19th century, more impressive structures in the Federal and Classical Revival styles (the latter particularly as promulgated by Thomas Jefferson and his workmen) began to appear in the region. These included notable examples in Jefferson's home country of Albemarle, just to the south of Orange County. Still, these structures remained the centers of extensive working plantations rather than rural retreats.⁹

Following the decline of Virginia agriculture in the first part of the 19th century, the central Piedmont was rediscovered by wealthy businessmen with mercantile and industrial connections, whose incomes were not dependent on weather, pests, and unstable agriculture prices. With the advent of railroads to the area in the mid- and latter 19th century, and the subsequent advent of automobiles and improved roads, it became increasingly feasible for numbers of wealthy businessmen to purchase old plantations or rural acreage for summer homes or country retreats.

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Existing homes might be renovated and enlarged, or new edifices constructed, and it became increasingly common for wealthy owners to turn to architects, rather than local builders, for their designs. Some of these owners, like C. C. Taliaferro, had roots in the vicinity; others, like the Augustus family, had no local family history, but were drawn to the region for its pleasant surroundings and, at times, the presence of other friends or family members who had acquired properties in the area. By the later 19th century and first part of the 20th century, Orange County and the surrounding Piedmont boasted numerous country estates, with houses in a diverse range of architectural styles and with varying degrees of display. Many of these properties were utilized as country retreats or vacation homes rather than a sole residence. Stylistically, regional country houses included examples of Second Empire and Queen Anne design (particularly for the late 19th century and early 20th century), and, moving further into the 20th century, Colonial Revival, Georgian Revival, Classical Revival, and Beaux Arts styles.¹⁰

Important examples in Orange County included not only the 1888 Second Empire Mount Sharon but the similar, nearby Hawfield (ca. 1881, enlarging an earlier house; burned 1937). Other notable country houses, all in western Orange County, were the massive stone Mount Athos (a Queen Anne mansion modified from stock George Barber plans, built ca. 1899 and burned 1903), and the large brick Colonial Revival mansions at Rocklands (ca. 1905, designer unidentified) and Tivoli (ca. 1908, designer also unidentified). Both Rocklands and Tivoli were built for Richmond businessmen. The Rocklands house was remodeled in the 1930s by William Lawrence Bottomley into its present Classical Revival appearance.¹¹

Among notable Georgian Revival residences in the central Virginia Piedmont, two fine early 20th century examples are Lochiel and Achnacarry in southern Orange County near Gordonsville. Both were built for members of the Cameron family, who had Richmond and Petersburg milling connections, and who owned extensive acreage in the vicinity. Lochiel, a seven-bay, two-and-a-half-story brick house with a hipped roof, a story-and-a-half side wing and an attached garden pavilion, was designed ca. 1916-1917 by the New York firm of Griffin and Wynkoop. Achnacarry, a slightly later adaptation of the Georgian Revival style, is a five-bay, two-and-a-half story brick house with a slightly lower two-story side wing and a detached garage; it was designed in 1923-1924 by Horace Wells Sellars of Philadelphia. Another significant Orange County Georgian Revival residence, contemporary with Mount Sharon, is Grelen, built in 1935-1936 a few miles north of the town of Orange. Grelen, a five-bay, two-and-a-half story brick house with a hipped roof and flanking story-and-a-half wings, was designed by Walter Dabney Blair, a Virginia native who practiced in New York City and undertook numerous commissions for the University of Virginia. Another fine regional Georgian Revival example, Gallison Hall, is located west of Charlottesville in Albemarle County, and was designed by Stanhope Johnson of Lynchburg in 1933. It is a five-part, two-and-a-half story brick house with a high hipped roof; its exterior appearance is reminiscent of some of the great James River mansions such as Westover and Carter's Grove.

In 1939, following his design for Mount Sharon, Louis Bancel LaFarge designed another significant Georgian Revival residence for a wealthy client. This was Wethersfield, constructed in Amenia, Dutchess County, New York, for investor and philanthropist Chauncey D. Stillman. Built on a more modest scale than Mount Sharon, and reminiscent of vernacular mid-Atlantic

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Georgian farm houses, Wethersfield features a three-bay, two-story brick main block with a lower two-story brick side wing. The gable roofs of both the main block and the wing are covered with slate. The house provided a setting for Mr. Stillman's extensive collection of historic furniture and artwork, and was set within a three-acre formal garden that was designed with the house. Mr. Stillman was also an active horseman, and an extensive brick stable and carriage house complex was constructed as well. Although the advent of World War II and changing tastes would subsequently limit commissions for large Georgian Revival country houses, LaFarge remained justly proud of his early work. In his entry for the 1956 *American Architects Directory* (1st ed.), LaFarge cited Mount Sharon as well as Wethersfield among what he considered his major commissions.¹² Mount Sharon is one of two Georgian Revival-style dwellings known in the United States to be designed by LaFarge and it was his first commission for this style and represents his only complete work in Virginia.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Lay, K. Edward, *The Architecture of Jefferson Country: Charlottesville and Albemarle County, Virginia* (Charlottesville and London, University Press of Virginia, 2000).

Miller, Ann L., architectural research files (private), Orange, Virginia.

Miller, Ann L., *Antebellum Orange: The Pre-Civil War Homes, Public Buildings and Historic Sites of Orange County, Virginia* (Orange, Va., Moss Publications for the Orange County Historical Society, 1988).

Miller, Ann L., "Mount Sharon" in Bryan Clark Green, Calder Loth, and William M. S. Rasmussen, eds., *Lost Virginia: Vanished Architecture of the Old Dominion* (Charlottesville, Howell Press, 2001).

Mount Sharon historical files (private), Mount Sharon Farm, Orange, Virginia.

Mount Sharon papers, Orange County Historical Society, Orange, Virginia.

Orange County deed records, Orange County Circuit Court Clerk's office, Orange, Virginia.

Scott, W. W., *A History of Orange County, Virginia* (Richmond, Everett Waddey Co., 1907).

Wells, John E., and Robert E. Dalton, *The Virginia Architects 1835-1955* (Richmond, New South Architectural Press, 1997).

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

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Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Orange County Circuit Court Clerk's office, Orange, Virginia; Orange County Historical Society, Orange, Virginia; Mount Sharon historical files (located at the property), Orange, Virginia; Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): DHR File No. 068-0104

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property approximately 77.5 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 38.270212 | Longitude: 78.044343 |
| 2. Latitude: 38.278079 | Longitude: 78.047068 |
| 3. Latitude: 38.277742 | Longitude: 78.043656 |
| 4. Latitude: 38.272436 | Longitude: 78.039343 |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

- NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

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- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundaries of the nominated property correspond with Orange County tax parcel 30-24 as shown on the accompanying map and delineated by the thick dark line. The property is described in Orange County Deed Book 541, p. 799 as follows:

“fronting on the center line of State Secondary Route # 600, containing 77.494 acres, more or less, and known as “Mount Sharon”, being more particularly shown and described on a plat of survey by Milton Terry Estates, C.L.S., Inc., dated March 4, 1980, of record in the Clerk’s Office of the Circuit Court of Orange County, Virginia, in Deed Book 325, page 131.”

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries correspond to the present property lines which contain land historically associated with the nominated property, and include the Mount Sharon house and associated buildings.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Ann L .Miller
organization: Consultant
street & number: P.O. Box 29
city or town: Somerset state: VA zip code: 22972
e-mail: N/A
telephone: 540-923-5079
date: March 12, 2013

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

All photos common to:

Name of Property: Mount Sharon

City or Vicinity: Orange

County: Orange

State: VA

Photographer: Ann L. Miller

Dates Photographed: February 2011, March 2012, and August 2012

Digital Files stored at: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia.

Photo 1 of 18: VA_OrangeCounty_MountSharon_0001.

View: Setting, front (southwest) elevation of house and surrounding trees, camera facing southeast.

Photo 2 of 18: VA_OrangeCounty_MountSharon_0002.

View: Front (southwest) elevation of house, camera facing southeast.

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Photo 3 of 18: VA_OrangeCounty_MountSharon_0003.
View: Front (southwest) elevation of house, camera facing northeast

Photo 4 of 18: VA_OrangeCounty_MountSharon_0004.
View: Rear (northeast) elevation of house, camera facing southwest.

Photo 5 of 18: VA_OrangeCounty_MountSharon_0005.
View: Rear (northeast) elevation of house, camera facing east.

Photo 6 of 18: VA_OrangeCounty_MountSharon_0006.
View: Interior, dining room, camera facing southeast.

Photo 7 of 18: VA_OrangeCounty_MountSharon_0007.
View: Interior, view from living room into the hallway, camera facing southwest.

Photo 8 of 18: VA_OrangeCounty_MountSharon_0008.
View: Interior, living room, camera facing northwest.

Photo 9 of 18: VA_OrangeCounty_MountSharon_0009.
View: Interior, view from dining room into hallway towards library, camera facing northwest.

Photo 10 of 18: VA_OrangeCounty_MountSharon_0010.
View: Interior, library paneling covering hidden bar is slightly ajar, camera facing southeast.

Photo 11 of 18: VA_OrangeCounty_MountSharon_0011.
View: Interior, library paneling detail showing brass-lined socket for door knob, camera facing southeast.

Photo 12 of 18: VA_OrangeCounty_MountSharon_0012.
View: Interior, first floor west guest room in northwest wing, camera facing southeast.

Photo 13 of 18: VA_OrangeCounty_MountSharon_0013.
View: Interior, main stair, camera facing southwest.

Photo 14 of 18: VA_OrangeCounty_MountSharon_0014.
View: Interior, second floor sitting room in north hyphen, camera facing north.

Photo 15 of 18: VA_OrangeCounty_MountSharon_0015.
View: Farm manager's house, camera facing northeast.

Photo 16 of 18: VA_OrangeCounty_MountSharon_0016.
View: Chauffeur's quarters and garage (now guest house and office), camera facing southeast.

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Photo 17 of 18: VA_OrangeCounty_MountSharon_0017.
View: Small garage, camera facing east.

Photo 18 of 18: VA_OrangeCounty_MountSharon_0018.
View: Gateposts, camera facing northeast.

ENDNOTES

1. For an overview of humidification and other early 20th century environmental control and air-conditioning systems, see Gail Cooper, *Air-conditioning America: Engineers and the Controlled Environment, 1900-1960* (Baltimore and London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).
2. For the Taliaferro patents, see Virginia Patent Book 12, p. 489; Virginia Patent Book 13, p. 162, microfilm, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia. See also the “Memorandum” regarding the ownership history of Mount Sharon, by Dr. A. G. Grinnan and George S. Shackelford, n.d. (but from references in the text, written shortly after 1875); Mount Sharon papers, Orange County Historical Society, Orange, Virginia. For an image of the ca. 1888 house and a brief description of the property, see W.W. Scott, *A History of Orange County, Virginia* (Richmond, Everett Waddey Co., 1907), p. 56 and pp. 209-210, and Ann L. Miller, “Mount Sharon” in Bryan Clark Green, Calder Loth, and William M. S. Rasmussen, eds., *Lost Virginia: Vanished Architecture of the Old Dominion* (Charlottesville, Howell Press, 2001), p. 84. Notes on the history of the old Mount Sharon gardens, dated November 7, 1932, were written by Kathleen Newman Taliaferro, wife of Anthony Barclay Taliaferro; they were the last members of the Taliaferro family to own the property. In her notes, Mrs. Taliaferro cited a traditional date of ca. 1770 for the gardens, with various later improvements and additions (copy in the Mount Sharon historical files, located at the property).
3. For reference to the Taliaferro family’s transfer of the property, see Orange County Deed Book 107, p. 435 and p. 466. For the purchase of the main Mount Sharon tract by Mrs. Augustus, see Orange County Deed Book 108, p. 421; her purchase of an additional portion of the Mount Sharon tract is recorded at Orange County Deed Book 108, p. 426. Additional information on the Augustus family and the cost of the house are in the Mount Sharon historical files, located at the property.
4. Biographical information on Louis Bancel LaFarge is included in his obituary (*New York Times*, July 4, 1989; in the *American Architects Directory* (1st ed., 1956 and 2nd ed., 1962), and in *Who Was Who in America* (10th ed., 1989-1993). The latter sources noted that LaFarge’s post-Mount Sharon partnerships were LaFarge & Knox ((1938-1942); LaFarge, Knox & Murphy (1947-1960), and LaFarge, Murphy & Morey (1961-1966), all located in New York City (Mount Sharon historical files, located at the property).

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5. See Orange County Aerial Map (1937 series) 143-25, Orange County Historical Society, Orange, Virginia. For the Scott Stadium project, see Reid A. Dunn, *The Construction of the Scott Stadium, University of Virginia* (submitted to the Academic Board of the Virginia Military Institute by Reid A. Dunn as a Thesis for the Degree of Civil Engineer, May 1932).

6. For Ellen Biddle Shipman's involvement with the Mount Sharon interior design and gardens, see the Mount Sharon historical files, located at the property; her papers do not contain plans or references for the Mount Sharon features. Period photographs in the Mount Sharon files show robustly-patterned wallpaper in the living room, featuring a palm tree motif. This same wallpaper was installed, in another color scheme, in the formal dining room of another significant Orange County estate, Montpelier, then the home of nationally-prominent horsewoman Marion duPont Scott. The Montpelier wall paper was observed *in situ* by the preparer of this nomination, who served as Montpelier's Director of Research (1989-1992) and subsequently as a consultant to the restoration (2000-2009). The dining room and surrounding sections of the house, added by the duPont family ca. 1901, were removed in the recent restoration of the house to its Madison-era appearance, ca. 1820.

7. Mrs. Eldridge's purchase of the property is recorded at Orange County Deed Book 149, p. 460.

8. The sale of the house tract from the Eldridge family to Donald McClellan, is recorded at Orange County Deed Book 325, p. 129. Mr. McClellan sold the property to William Kumman in 1985 (recorded at Orange County Deed Book 370, p. 773; Mr. Kumman sold it to Mr. and Mrs. Dennis D. Schauer in 1986 (recorded at Orange County Deed Book 382, p. 108), and the Schauers sold it to Mr. and Mrs. John Sheldon Clark in 1988 (recorded at Orange County Deed Book 425, p. 237). The Clarks sold Mount Sharon to Mr. and Mrs. Seilheimer in 1995; the property initially was held as the Mount Sharon Land Trust, V. R. Shackelford III, trustee (recorded at Orange County Deed Book 541, p. 799). It is now held by Mr. and Mrs. Seilheimer as trustees of revocable trusts (recorded as Orange County Instruments 120005085, 120005086, and 120005087). The "Instrument" classification, the current electronic recordation term, has superseded the earlier Deed Books.

9. For extant antebellum buildings in Orange County, see Ann L. Miller, *Antebellum Orange: The Pre-Civil War Homes, Public Buildings and Historic Sites of Orange County, Virginia* (Orange, Va., Moss Publications for the Orange County Historical Society, 1988). For Albemarle County structures, see K. Edward Lay, *The Architecture of Jefferson Country: Charlottesville and Albemarle County, Virginia* (Charlottesville and London, University Press of Virginia, 2000).

10. For an overview of late 19th and early 20th century country houses in and around Orange County, see Ann L. Miller, *Montpelier During the duPont Ownership: Historic Context and Overview* (unpublished research paper for the Montpelier Foundation, Montpelier Station, Virginia, 2006), pp. 1-9. For Albemarle County country houses of that era, see Lay, *The Architecture of Jefferson Country*, especially pp. 253-265.

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11. For Hawfield and Mount Athos, see *Lost Virginia*, p. 81 and pp. 87-88. The Mount Athos site, Rocklands, and Tivoli are all located within the Madison-Barbour Rural Historic District, as are Lochiel and Achnacarry, noted in the next paragraph.

12. For references to LaFarge's Wethersfield commission, see the Mount Sharon historical files, located at the property.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

